



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

WHAT THE SHAKESPEARE TERCENTENARY CELEBRATION MIGHT MEAN FOR THE SCHOOLS

PERCIVAL CHUBB

Ethical Culture Society, St. Louis, Missouri

Hundreds upon hundreds of letters have been pouring into the Drama League requesting help in organizing dramatic celebrations of the Shakespeare tercentenary in schools, colleges, and communities. The dramatic activities throughout the country will be unprecedented. What ought this phenomenal manifestation of interest in Shakespeare and the drama to mean for our schools?

First and foremost, it should mean for teachers of English a festival of atonement. Let them approach it in a penitential mood, bring forth fruits meet for repentance, and lay these offerings on the great dramatist's grave—symbols of a new heart and conscience, an earnest of resolve to abandon the ruinous abuse of Shakespeare's plays.

Whose conscience is clear? Who has withstood the academic pressure which has required the treatment of great popular plays in the vulgar tongue as repositories of obscure speech and curious lore? Who has handled them in the spirit in which they were composed, to the end and for the effect which their creator intended? Who has reflected Shakespeare's quite secondary concern for their existence in book-form, so only that they stirred men's pulses and reached men's souls? More specifically, have they been treated as plays, whose primary values lay in their large visible dramatic appeal? Or have they first been shredded into lines, and then desiccated into words for monotonous mastication? Have they been seen first as plays before they have been read as texts?—that is the crucial issue.

These plays were not peddled as "books of the words" to coach the folk of London Town before they flocked to the Globe. Shakespeare's practice was rather that of our contemporary Barrie, who

has refused to print his plays—or most of them—because the reading prejudices the reader. Impracticable? Not at all. Why should it not be the happy and profitable task of high-school Seniors or Juniors (as evidence of their understanding and delight) to give them in annual and semiannual rotation to the Freshmen?

If we did our duty by drama in this way, then might we escape this shame—that with all our pains as teachers in our schools the popular patronage of our drama is what it is today. The test of our work is not in the school, but after school is out, in theater and concert hall. The dullards of pedagogy have done this: defeated the one sole aim of all teaching of the arts; namely, the development of the right kind of art-patronage after our young charges have left school. Let the spirit of Shakespeare be our lantern out of this Egyptian darkness. Let the Shakespeare celebration be the challenge and opportunity to mend our ways, so that we work to this one justifying end, and reject whatever impedes it—ridiculous systems of marking, and examinations devised by blind drillmasters who ignore the difference between art and science, appreciation and knowledge, and who have not recognized letters as an art that belongs with music and the graphic arts, to be handled accordingly so as to produce admiration and chastened taste, lasting liking and interest.

Admiration is the breath and sign of life in the arts; and you can't bully a boy into admiration by any lash of low marking. You may perhaps drive him to dull diligence, but that is a different matter. Dull diligence is our ruin. We may safely exact it in some subjects; but in all art work it is different. Results must speak; and painful, uninspired, incompetent effort should not carry the palm. A plague upon "effort" as a standard here!

The belief in bullying, even of the subtler sort, only develops literary "nagging"—the devil's own instrument, as every nagging parent and every benagged husband should warn us. The reaction of disgust is sure. Are we innocent of the attempts to "nag" Shakespeare into our young people? Nagged ourselves by a system of precise ratings (the joy of our scholastic statisticians) we sometimes fall from grace.

Other sins there are to be covered by our penitence. Enumeration is an ungracious business. I will put only one other question: How much worrying will a play stand? Our tendency under a drill system is to forget that these young eager minds want, and in fact can grasp, only the large human values in things. What they chiefly relish and what they chiefly need is the vicarious experience mediated through the plays. And they are right. That is what their elders who thronged to the plays asked in the first instance; and it is what we all still ask. Why should we meet the young on any other basis? We say of the little child in the kindergarten that he must be called upon for large muscular movements first; and we have done away with Froebelian minutiae. So with the mind: the big movements must come first—large apprehension, big totalities and unities. Healthy curiosity will wish to be satisfied as to smaller matters—words and phrases, poetic and technical values—later on.

So, then, the Shakespeare tercentenary celebration should be presented as a happy chance to escape from an utterly false attitude and treatment of Shakespeare and the drama, and indeed of all the major species of literary art. We may snatch at it as a corrective agency whereby we may insist, in the name of our art, on the treatment of these literary species according to their nature—song as song in association with music; story as dramatized recital (as in the type-form of the ballad); drama as drama, including the folk-arts of dance, pantomime, pageantry, and ceremonial. I wish I could add here new emphasis to my belief that we are the victims of bookishness, print, eye-mindedness (whereof the last triumph is the “movie”—speechless drama); for I see here the root reason why our literary education fails to carry over into life—to standardize taste, to develop admiration, and to result in the kind of patronage of song, story, and drama which can promote a popular culture which is worthy and promising. It must suffice, however, to insist that the master purpose of our education in the arts must be to prepare the young for the right kind of art-patronage when they leave school. In the case of drama this must mean both active patronage by amateur endeavor, and enlightened patronage of the

professional theater through the box office. It is to our schools and colleges we must look to educate the theater audiences of the future.

As to the more specific question, What should we do hereafter with Shakespeare in the cause of the art at which he wrought? the answer hinges on the motivation behind our efforts. The occasion will yield the maximum of fruitful results, in my opinion, if we go into it with these three considerations in mind:

1. That we lack anything worthy to be regarded as a national popular culture; or folk-culture—a disturbing proof of the futility and sterility of our school culture in letters and the arts.

2. That this is a graver matter than it has ever been before, because the work of increasing numbers of people is becoming mechanical and routine, and is losing its ethical and cultural values; so that as the souls of men cannot be fed by their work, they must be fed by leisure activities and interests.

3. That this prescribes a new task for education—the deliberate training of the young for the profitable use of their leisure; and as a consequence, a heading off of the movement in the other direction of “industrial” and “vocational” education, and the protection of the child against the tyranny of industrial forces.

But the discussion of these large questions will take us far afield from Shakespearean interests; and the mere enumeration of them must suffice to indicate the wide reach of the educational issues involved in the proper utilization of Shakespeare, and the promotion of drama in our schools.